



Wisconsin Wing Civil Air Patrol

United States Air Force Auxiliary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2011

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Civil Air Patrol Poised to Support EAA's 2011 AirVenture

WISCONSIN – With the world's largest fly-in in their backyard, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) members from Wisconsin Wing are poised to support EAA's AirVenture, being held July 25-31 at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh, Wis. and surrounding communities.

The mission is believed to be the only precautionary search and rescue mission in the Great Lakes Region authorized by the United States Air Force.



One of six WIWG aircraft dedicated to the EAA mission.

Photo: Capt. Jeri Gonwa

CAP starts their mission before the event begins and ends after it closes in order to accommodate the approximately 10,000 planes flying in and out of the area. The volunteer members, under the direction of the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, conduct searches for overdue aircraft and locate emergency locator transmitters (ELT) that may be a distress signal from a plane. The well trained ground teams and supporting aircrews are poised to help.

A Wing of Excellence

Lt. Col. Dean Klassy, commander of the Southeast Wisconsin Group and project officer for this event, coordinates the mission which has approximately 70 members a day staffing four bases within a 35 mile radius of Oshkosh.

The Mobile Command Center monitors all communications within the mission as well as the weather for any approaching storms. Being in constant communication with handheld radios as well as portable bases at the remaining bases, CAP members are in constant communication with each other.



Aircrew completes preflight mission briefing.

Photo: Capt. Jeff Stockinger

Explaining the main mission of CAP during this event, Klassy states that, “One of our major missions is to follow up on Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports of overdue aircraft on Visual Flight Rules (VFR) flight plans to Oshkosh.”

Members create a data base of all tail numbers of the planes as well as where they are parked. Some pilots forget to close their flight plans upon arrival thus sparking a call from the Federal Aviation Administration to CAP to try to locate the plane. Once the plane is located the FAA will close the flight plan. Checking the logs and physically verifying by sight if a plane has arrived, saves countless hours of manpower. If the plane is not found, a search by ground teams and aircrew ensues.

Gusts of winds or a hard landing can set off an ELT. If the air traffic control tower or a CAP plane flying overhead hears it, ground teams set out to locate the plane. When found, additional efforts are made to contact the owner of the plane in order to shut off the signal.

Ground teams at Seaplane Base also work with the Coast Guard by logging in the planes that land on Lake Winnebago.

CAP is also poised to respond in the unfortunate event of a natural disaster. Not only are they trained in search and rescue, but clean-up efforts after a storm as well as aerial photography. Providing aerial photos of damage helps Wisconsin Emergency Management and local law enforcement agencies assess the damage and resources needed to help in the clean-up efforts.